

Summer 1985

# WVRHC Newsletter, Summer 1985

West Virginia & Regional History Center

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# West Virginia and Regional History Collection

## NEWSLETTER

No. 2

West Virginia University Library

Summer 1985

### Patrick W. Gainer Folklore Archives Donated to Collection

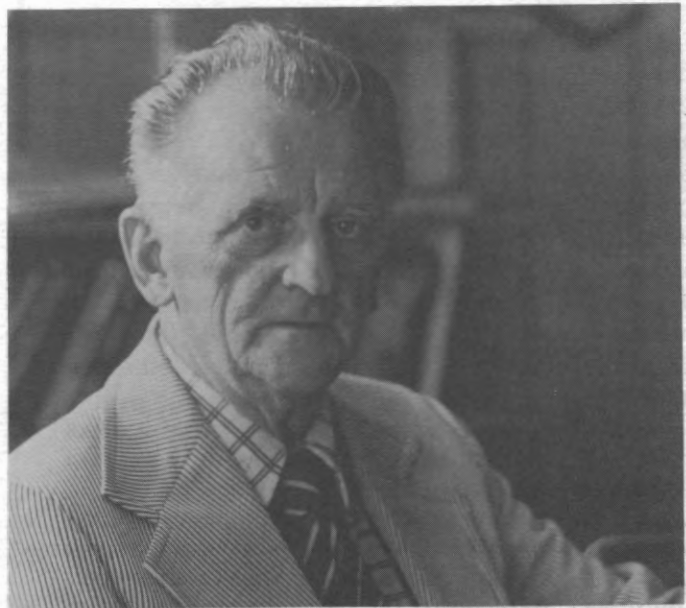
Patrick Gainer was proud of his mountain heritage. Indeed, he harbored a devotion to traditional West Virginia culture which was impassioned, providing life-long purpose and direction.

His quest to document and defend the ways of the state's rural folk took him as many as 20,000 miles a year, up and down every hollow. Armed with pencil and paper early in his career and later on with a tape recorder, Gainer spent the better part of 50 years recording and performing the music that his rural neighbors kept close to their hearts and far from the mass culture he disdained.

The invaluable fruits of this labor of love, together with personal papers that document a varied and fascinating career, were recently donated to the West Virginia Collection by the Gainer family. The collection includes over a dozen linear feet of manuscripts, approximately one hundred fifty audiotapes, photographs, books and a variety of memorabilia.

Born in Parkersburg but reared in rural Gilmer County, Gainer grew up within a family bearing a rich singing tradition. He often credited his grandfather F. C. Gainer with providing his early musical education and his chief inspiration.

After attending the Glenville Normal School, Gainer came to West Virginia University in the 1920s. At the time the University was recognized as a national hub of folk music scholarship. His instructors included John Harrington Cox, author of the first significant American folksong study—*Folk Songs of the South* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1925) and Louis Watson Chappell whose landmark book *John Henry: A Folklore Study* (Jena: Frommanische Verlag, 1933) established a standard in ballad scholarship. It was under their tutelage that Gainer first caught the ballad hunting bug. Together with Chappell, and at other times with fellow student and Gilmer Countian Carey Woofter, Gainer made his initial



Patrick Ward Gainer  
1904-1981

forays into the countryside in search of surviving remnants of a fading musical tradition.

Receiving both baccalaureate and master's degrees from West Virginia University, Gainer secured employment in 1928 at St. Louis University where he served the dual role of English professor and gleeclubs director. He simultaneously found time to embark on doctoral study under the renowned folklorist Archer Taylor at the University of Chicago. He received his Ph.D. five years later, not from Chicago but from St. Louis where he continued to teach until 1942.

Having established a considerable reputation as a music director, singer and radio personality during his St. Louis years, Gainer was invited to direct USO activities in the Caribbean and South Atlantic during World War II. At the war's end he returned to his native state, accepting a position in the English Department at West Virginia University.

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West Virginia and Regional History Collection NEWSLETTER.  
A triannual publication of the West Virginia and Regional History  
Collection, West Virginia University Library, Colson Hall,  
Morgantown, West Virginia 26506. (304) 293-3536.

Staff: David Bartlett, Annette Cotter, John Cuthbert, Harold  
Forbes, Susan Beates Hansen, Alex Lubman, Mary  
Markey, Martha Neville, George Parkinson.

Editor: John Cuthbert

Continued

## Patrick W. Gainer Folklore Archives

ty. Here he remained until his retirement in 1972.

An indefatigable worker, Gainer dedicated the balance of his life to a personal crusade to revitalize folk traditions and to elevate the image and self-esteem of the Appalachian people at a time when derogatory stereotypes flourished. He found the term "hillbilly" to be particularly offensive and considered "hillbilly music" to be a shallow caricature which threatened both the existence of authentic folksong and the self-respect of the mountain people. In liner notes to his record albums of *Folk Songs of the Allegheny Mountains* he attempted to set the record straight:

In recent years there has been much confusion of "hillbilly" songs with genuine folk songs. There is, of course, no relation between the two. The various vocal and instrumental styles of the modern "hillbilly" singers and musicians are a fairly recent development and were never known to the genuine mountaineers until they were heard on radio. Indeed, the word "hillbilly" was until recent years considered a term of contempt by real hill dwellers.

The people who settled in the Allegheny Mountains were lovers of freedom and were willing to accept great hardships in order to be free. They were independent, industrious and courageous. If they sometimes lacked an abundance of book-learning, they made up for it by storing their minds with a vast treasury of knowledge among which was the best that had ever been heard in story and song.

Gainer's message found a receptive audience wherever he went. His Appalachian folklore course at West Virginia University was perhaps the most popular class ever offered on that campus. The Extension courses and frequent lecture recitals he spread around the state were as well received. Folk festivals, such as the still flourishing West Virginia Folk Festival, which he himself established at Glenville in 1950, provided another forum.

A series of publications including *Folk Songs From the West Virginia Hills* (Seneca Books, 1975) and *Witches, Ghosts, and Signs: Folklore of the Southern Appalachian*

*Mountains* (Seneca Books, 1975) extended his discoveries and teachings to folklore enthusiasts throughout the country. Generally less pedantic than the publications of his academic colleagues, Gainer's various works were addressed to the general public. His goals were to disseminate and rekindle.

Blessed with a fine tenor voice and a flair for the dramatic, Gainer was at his best in song. Consequently, of all his various publications, the two albums of *Folk Songs of the Allegheny Mountains* (Folk Heritage Recordings, 1963, n.d.) achieved the greatest degree of popularity. One critic considered the pair "better publicity for West Virginia than any amount of literature distributed by Chambers of Commerce." Many people apparently agreed with this assessment, for Gainer was the recipient of countless honors and awards ranging from "Most Loyal Mountaineer" to "The Order of the Thirty-Fifth Star."

An important addition to the West Virginia Collection's extensive folklore holdings, the Patrick Gainer Collection is a most welcome acquisition.

## The Patrick Ward Gainer Endowment

I doubt that there are many of our readers who are unfamiliar with the work of Patrick Gainer. As one of West Virginia University's most popular professors, and one of West Virginia's strongest promoters, Gainer attained a degree of popularity during his lifetime that is rarely awarded to members of his profession. This recognition was, of course, well deserved for he may have done more than anyone in the state's history to heighten public awareness and pride in West Virginia's rich folk heritage. In honor of his achievements, and in order to foster the development of his collection and the continuation of his work, we are pleased to announce the establishment of the Patrick Ward Gainer Endowment for Regional Folklore Study.



Gainer watches ninety-year-old Pat Cogar perform at the 1954 West Virginia Folk Festival.

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## Patrick Ward Gainer Endowment

The Gainer collection represents an important complement to the Regional History Collection's strong folklore holdings. Indeed, it is a missing link. The papers of West Virginia's pioneer folklorists, John Harrington Cox and Louis Watson Chappell, have gradually found their way into the Collection over the years, along with those of several of their contemporaries. As a result regional folklore scholarship during the early part of the century is well documented. Unfortunately, however, much of this early work occurred before the advent of practical field recording equipment, a fact which limits its research value considerably. The Cox collection is entirely in manuscript. Chappell, on the other hand, employed an unwieldy disc recording machine during the latter part of his career, and from 1937-1947 a methodical folksong collecting campaign resulted in an archive of 647 records, embracing over 2000 songs and instrumental tunes.

With the exception of Dr. Gainer's work, the extent and significance of folklore scholarship at the University declined after World War II until a new campaign to document the state's fading musical traditions was begun by Thomas S. Brown of the University's Division of Music in 1970. As the sole folklorist at the University, and the primary scholar within the state during the interim, Gainer bridged a tremendous gap.

Gainer's archives are especially significant for several reasons. As one of the few academic folklorists who grew up within the tradition he studied, he possessed a special ability to identify with the tradition bearers of his native region. Consequently, he was able to penetrate close knit barriers that were impervious to outsiders. Working primarily during a period when ballad singing was supposedly all but extinct, Gainer proved that a vigorous singing tradition survived in the rural counties of central West Virginia where he was raised. In the process he made a number of important discoveries. He holds the distinction of unearthing more extant Child ballads, the traditional focus of vocal folk music study, than any of his colleagues; his book *Folk Songs From the West Virginia Hills* (Grantsville, WV: Seneca Books, 1975) contains no fewer than fifty. Yet at the same time he also worked to document instrumental music, a subject too often ignored by contemporaries who were more interested in relics of popular literature than in folk music per se. Gainer was both a literary scholar and a musicologist—credentials which are now recognized as essential for those undertaking serious folk music scholarship.

The importance of Gainer's work is augmented by the fact that it documents a transitional era in the evolution of American folk culture—an era that saw dying traditions suddenly revived and commercialized, perhaps the result of a mass American reaction to the technological revolu-

## Visiting Committee West Virginia and Regional History Collection

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William Adler, *Weston*  
Robert Conte, *White Sulphur Springs*  
Charles Daugherty, *Institute*  
Dorothy Davis, *Salem*  
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Florena E. Duling, *Scherr*  
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Otis Rice, *Montgomery*

tion of the 1950s and 1960s. An outspoken opponent of commercially inspired folklore, or "fakelore" as some have called it, Gainer likely benefited from rekindled interest in folklore despite its roots and motives. The revival no doubt contributed to the broad appeal of his folklore classes at West Virginia University and to renewed interest in, and resources in support of field collecting and research. It also ensured the enduring success of the West Virginia Folk Festival which Gainer established in 1950 at Glensville, near his Tanner, West Virginia home. The study of Gainer's archives will help scholars to assess the folk revival's true impact—positive or negative—on the survival of folk traditions in West Virginia. Considering the breadth of its contents, it is certain that the collection will shed new light upon the evolution of regional folk music and folk music scholarship during an era which is otherwise poorly documented.

Now that the Gainer archives are within our walls, the considerable task of developing the collection lies ahead. The job will entail many hours of cataloging and preserva-

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## Patrick Ward Gainer Endowment

tional activity. Simultaneously, we intend to seek out supportive material regarding Dr. Gainer and his career, and devise a plan for disseminating the best of the collection's contents, perhaps through publications or sound recordings. This work will, of course be costly and, indeed, our ability to carry out our ambitious plans will depend largely upon external funding. It is for this reason that the Patrick W. Gainer Endowment has been created.

Some months ago, during the period of transfer and appraisal of the Gainer collection, Dr. Gainer's son, Nicholas, suggested that perhaps his employer, Borg-Warner Corporation, might consider awarding a small grant to the Regional History Collection in order to facilitate our work with his father's archives. A proposal was immediately written and forwarded to Mr. Gainer and he, in turn, submitted it to Borg-Warner. A grant of \$8000 resulted. Rather than spend the money on the direct costs of processing the collection, we recognized that our greatest need was that of long-term support for the continuance of the kind of work to which Gainer dedicated his life—field collecting, folklore scholarship and dissemination projects, projects like our EDDEN HAMMONS COLLECTION album, or the WEST VIRGINIA FOLK MUSIC guide.

We have begun to look upon Borg-Warner's gift as seed money, the foundation of a Patrick Gainer Endowment which will provide continuous annuity income. The revenues will be dedicated to supporting our efforts to document West Virginia traditional life and disseminate our finest folklore holdings.

Friends of mountain heritage everywhere, especially those who knew Dr. Gainer and directly benefited from his friendship and teachings, are urged to contribute whatever they can to help perpetuate this important work. We would also welcome correspondence from anyone with pertinent information regarding Gainer that might augment the record and strengthen our holdings—career facts, data regarding the many people he recorded, or even the special memories of his students and followers.

Your contributions, whatever they may be, will foster the continuation of Dr. Gainer's mission and the endurance of the rich folk legacy that belongs to all West Virginians.

John Cuthbert  
Associate Curator

*Contributions to the Patrick W. Gainer Endowment should be made payable to the West Virginia University Foundation, Inc., and sent to the Patrick W. Gainer Endowment, West Virginia and Regional History Collection, Colson Hall, West Virginia University, Morgantown, WV 26506.*



Curator George Parkinson poses with a rare 35-star American flag that was recently donated to the West Virginia Collection by Bruce Craddock of Gahanna, Ohio. Immediately after the birth of West Virginia as the nation's thirty-fifth state in 1863, Union forces, fresh from a costly victory at Gettysburg, raised this flag over Shepherdstown. The flag was first owned by Lt. George Ernest of the Army of the Potomac who noted that it "was displayed in Shepherdstown to symbolize the growing sentiment of these (West) Virginians to conclude the conflict in favor of the Federal forces." As a thirty-sixth state, Nevada, joined the Union in 1866, the thirty-five star flag had a brief lifespan.

## Mud River Baptist Church Records Preserved; Other Church Records Sought

Churches, like other vital institutions—local government and schools—are storehouses of information regarding local history. In addition to being keepers of local genealogy they commonly maintain minutes and archives that comprise a valuable record of community life. In the case of antebellum rural settlements they sometimes constitute the only record.

The recently acquired Mud River Baptist Church Collection is a case in point. These meticulously kept records provide a wealth of information regarding rural Ona, West Virginia, dating back to 1812.



The records contain abundant data regarding the church's membership from its beginnings—the names of active members, births, deaths, and who married whom. The minutes of monthly church meetings which were conducted exclusively by men, reflecting the social structure of the time, record the aims and progress of the church as an institution.

The church served not only as the center for religious activity, but also as a 19th-century social service agency. According to records from the early 1800s, church elders once met and agreed to take a widow to her son's home in Ohio. Transportation arrangements were made and it was decided who would accompany the woman on the journey. The minute books also outline the creed by which members would live and worship God, as well as the rules for behavior in church. At church meetings, members who chose to speak were given the advice: "He shall strictly adhere to the subject and in no wise make remarks on the slips or railings or imperfections that has spock before Him but shall fairly state the case and matter as nearly as he can so as to convey his light or dark."

The Mud River Baptist Church records have come to us by virtue of our policy of offering microfilming and preservation service to churches and institutions in need of such assistance throughout the state. The service is offered free of charge in exchange for allowing us to maintain either the originals or a preservation copy of all pertinent records to insure that this unique information will not be lost to posterity.

Any church or other organization interested in this service is urged to call or write a Visiting Committee member in their area or to contact us directly.



*Ohio River at Wheeling by August Kollner, June 1845. Permanent Collection, Huntington Galleries.*

## Ohio River Odyssey In Preparation at Huntington Galleries

"Ohio River Odyssey" is the title of a comprehensive interpretive exhibition that is now being assembled at the Huntington Galleries of Huntington, West Virginia. Scheduled to open in the summer of 1987, the Odyssey's objective is to expand public awareness of the Ohio River's significance to the evolution of American history and

culture on both regional and national levels.

Funded initially by a grant from the Humanities Foundation of West Virginia, the exhibit is being designed and assembled by Galleries staff in conjunction with a roster of academic advisors drawn primarily from area colleges and universities. The Project is directed by Beth Hager, a West Virginia University alumna and former Hagley Fellow at the University of Delaware, with the assistance of Gerald Sutphin, a visual information specialist and river historian. The West Virginia Collection is one of several area repositories that have assumed active roles in researching and staging the exhibit. Curator George Parkinson and associate curator John Cuthbert are both members of the project's advisory board.

The Odyssey will be organized in the form of a journey down the Ohio—a sort of fluvial stroll down memory lane—with stops made at sites and settlements along the way that illustrate various exhibit ideas. The basic theme of man's interaction with the river from early Ohio Valley Indian culture to the present will be highlighted by display areas representing topics such as the river's strategic importance during the French and Indian, Revolutionary, and Civil wars, its vital role in the westward expansion of American civilization and industry, and also its contributions to national culture as imparted through folklore, music, literature and art.

The project staff is now in the process of seeking out relevant materials for the exhibit. Numerous historical artifacts, photographs, prints, and paintings have already been located, yet the search goes on. Ohio Valley manufactured products and river craft artifacts head the list of needed items. Anyone with information regarding available materials for the exhibit is urged to contact Ms. Hager at The Huntington Galleries, Park Hills, Huntington, West Virginia 25702 (304)529-2701.

## Waitman Barbe Scrapbooks Acquired

West Virginia poet Dr. Waitman Barbe had three aims in life: to teach, to write poetry, and to achieve friendships. A review of Barbe's illustrious career as an educational pioneer in West Virginia, as a former head of the English Department at West Virginia University, and as a humanitarian, indicate that he successfully achieved these aims.

Dr. Barbe lived a full life. His colleagues considered him to be a brilliant teacher, and indeed, to his students he was an inspiration. Virtually all who knew him found him to be extraordinarily cheerful and courteous. He was a handsome man, his brown eyes, snow-white hair and florid complexion combining to present a very striking figure.

The highlights of Dr. Barbe's busy career are preserved in a group of scrapbooks which were recently donated to the West Virginia Collection by Mr. and Mrs. E. C. Gerwig of Parkersburg. The books are filled with photographs, newspaper clippings and handwritten poems composed by Dr. Barbe, and collected and preserved by his wife, Clara Louise Gould Barbe.

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## Waitman Barbe Scrapbooks

Dr. Barbe's contributions as an educator—he is credited with helping to establish and develop the school system in West Virginia—and as a poet are well-known, but it is in the scrapbooks that Dr. Barbe's compassion, friendliness and concern for others are revealed.

Preserved in one of the books is an invitation to Dr. Barbe's wedding of 6 June 1894, when he married Clara Gould of Parkersburg, West Virginia, in a ceremony at her parents' home. Another book contains photographs of the Barbes' stay in England in 1908-09, while Dr. Barbe was enrolled at Oxford University.

A section of one book is devoted to newspaper clippings about Barbe's death in 1925 and efforts by his friends to erect a statue in his honor at West Virginia University, where he taught English literature and directed summer school for many years. There is also a touching letter from a close friend who was one of the last people to talk with Dr. Barbe before his death.

Mr. and Mrs. E. C. Gerwig of Parkersburg, West Virginia, donated the scrapbooks to the library. Mr. Gerwig's mother, Lotta Gould Gerwig, was Mrs. Barbe's sister.



Waitman Barbe (center) & friends at Fourth of July picnic, 1891.

The Gerwigs also loaned a Barbe family photograph album containing numerous photographs of turn-of-the-century West Virginia University activities and people.

Born in Monongalia County, Barbe attended rural schools and the preparatory department of West Virginia University. He received his A.B. degree from WVU in 1884, his A.M. in 1887 and his M.S. in 1897. In 1900-01 he was a graduate student at Harvard University. He also received the honorary degree of Doctor of Letters from Dennison University in 1904.

Barbe was city editor and managing editor of the *Daily State Journal* in Parkersburg from 1885 until 1895 when he went to work for West Virginia University.

Along with his work in developing the school system in West Virginia, Barbe was an associate editor and eventual-

ly managing editor of the *West Virginia School Journal*. His various literary works include a group of his poems entitled "Ashes and Incense", which were published in 1891; "Going to College", published in 1899; "A Study of Poetry", 1905; "Famous Poems Explained", 1909; and "Great Poems Interpreted", published in 1913.

## Selected Accessions List

Arthurdale Letter. ALS, ca.1976. 1 item. Gift, 1985. A&M 2985.

Letter written by Carl Feiss of Gainesville, Florida, describing his experiences as a young architect supervising the construction of the vacuum cleaner plant at Arthurdale, West Virginia. Mentions living conditions, Eleanor Roosevelt, and offers an assessment of the impact that the project had in community planning.



Baptism on barge on Kanawha River near Raymond City, West Virginia, circa 1880.

Barbe, Waitman and Clara Gould. Papers, 1880-1920. 1 ms. box. Gift, 1983. A&M 2910.

Three scrapbooks, one containing information, poetry and newspaper clippings by and about Dr. Waitman Barbe, an administrator and chairman of the English Department at West Virginia University, and two regarding Barbe's wife, Clara Louise Gould of Parkersburg, and her family. Also one photograph album loaned for duplication.

Clark, Issac M. Ms., 1862. 1 item. Acquired, 1985. A&M 2987.

One leaf, with a different message on each side. The first is a letter to Clark from Joel Davidson on Ice's Ferry, West Virginia, promoting a folk-medicine cancer cure. En verso is a letter written by Clark to Lyman Robbins requesting a subscription to a dairy farming newspaper. Clark was a Bridgeport, Ohio, cheesemaker and mentions selling cheese to Union soldiers.



Everhart, James. ALS 1843. 1 item. Acquired, 1985. A&M 2988.

A letter written by Everhart to his parents in West Chester, Pennsylvania, describing his travels from Maysville, Kentucky to Natural Bridge, Virginia, on the way to Richmond, Virginia. Everhart vividly describes the conditions he experienced in travel by steamboat and stage and the mountain scenery he passed through. Sites mentioned are Guyandotte, Charleston, White and Blue Sulphur Springs, and The Hawk's Nest.



Cora L. McLaughlin as Cordelia. Shakespeare Pagent, Cincinnati, Ohio, 1889. Barbe Papers.

Gainer, Patrick Ward (1904-1981) Collection. Papers, photographs, sound recordings, 1890-1981. 37 linear feet. Gift, 1984.

Archives of Patrick Gainer, eminent West Virginia folklorist and West Virginia University professor of

English. Manuscripts include field folklore collections, lecture notes, book manuscripts, correspondence, student papers, folksong arrangements. Also materials regarding Gainer's position as director of South Atlantic USO activities during World War II; a journal of a folksong collecting trip to Ireland in 1961.

One hundred and fifty-three audio tapes containing vocal and instrumental folk music, folklore and oral history, recorded in West Virginia and in Scotland and Ireland. Nearly half of the material is performed by Gainer himself.

The collection also includes newspaper clippings relating to folklore and Gainer's career, as well as a variety of photographs, film clips and personal awards and memorabilia.

Kanawha & Middleport Railroad. Ledger, 1890-1900. Acquired, 1984. A&M 2989.

Ledger of the Kanawha & Middleport Railroad showing expenses and receipts for the years 1890-1900.

Morgantown Flour and Feed Building. 1945. 7 items. Transfer, 1985. A&M 2990.

Descriptions of the building on Clay Street prepared for the West Virginia Geological Survey include floor plans, architectural drawings, and photographs.



Morgantown glassworkers, circa 1920.

Morgantown Glassworkers. Photographs, ca. 1920. Gift.

Two photographs of Morgantown Glassworkers, ca. 1920.

Oil and Gas in Calhoun County. Typescript, 1977. 1 item. Gift, 1985. A&M 2976.

A history of the oil and gas industry in Calhoun County from 1866-1943, written by Harry Holliday, an oil fields worker. Covers all the major oil and gas producing areas in the county, from Grantsville in 1866 to Exxon's Deep Well, drilled in the 1940s.



**Register of Funerals. Notebook, 1893-1917. 1 item. Gift, 1985. A&M 2975.**

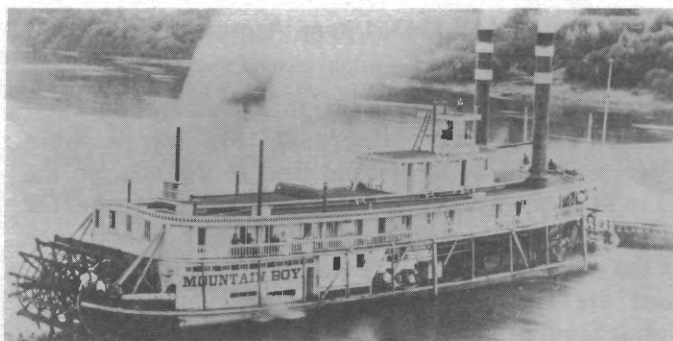
Record book of G. N. Short, a West Liberty undertaker, listing age at death, cause of death, next of kin, and place of burial of Mr. Short's clients.

**Riverboat Log Books. 2 ledgers. 1884. Acquired, 1985. A&M 2977.**

Logbooks of the steamboat Sonoma, which list cargo taken on and delivered on its daily run from Ravenswood to Parkersburg on the Ohio River in 1884.



*Interior of West Side Confectionary, Charleston, West Virginia, circa 1920.*



*The sternwheeler Mountain Bay on the Kanawha River circa 1880.*

**West Virginia Steamboats. Photographs, ca. 1850-1925. Loaned for duplications, 1985.**

Fifteen photographs of steamboats and West Virginia views from the Kanawha County area.

**Wood County Oil Lands. Ms., ca. 1882. 1 item. Acquired, 1985. A&M 2986.**

A report by Peter F. Stout, engineer and geologist, on oil-producing land near Parkersburg, West Virginia, commenting on available rail and water transportation, and production of nearby wells. The report was written to accompany a (lost) survey plat sent to the prospective buyer of the land. [The manuscript is undated, but probably dates 1876 or 1882, due to the mention of I. C. White.]

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*Waitman Barbe, circa 1890. See page 6.*